

VZCZCXRO5091  
RR RUEHBZ RUEHMA  
DE RUEHLC #0239/01 1481602  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 281602Z MAY 09  
FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1171  
INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1010  
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 1001  
RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE 0915  
RUEHMA/AMEMBASSY MALABO

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LIBREVILLE 000239

DEPT ALSO FOR AF/C LISA KORTE; PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER;  
DEPT PASS FOR USAID AFR/WA NATALIE FREEMAN

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [PGOV](#) [GB](#)

SUBJECT: GABON: ANTI-CORRUPTION NGO MEETS WITH SENIOR GOVERNMENT  
OFFICIALS

REF: (A) Libreville 0198  
(B) 08 Libreville 173  
(C) 08 Libreville 030  
(D) 08 Libreville 018

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) An international delegation from the NGO Publish What You Pay (PWYP) met with senior Gabonese government officials recently to discuss transparency in the oil, mining and timber industries and alleged mistreatment of local PWYP officials. The delegation reported that their meetings were generally positive, although it appears that they may have avoided some of the more contentious issues raised by their local affiliates. End Summary.

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Alleged Mistreatment of local NGOs  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Transparency in the oil, mining, and timber sectors, particularly the accuracy of revenue reporting, was the focus of the PWYP delegation's discussions with the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior, and other senior government officials. The delegation was in Gabon April 27-30 and met with the Ambassador at the conclusion of their trip.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The visiting PWYP representatives also raised the alleged mistreatment of their local associates, including the January 2008 suspension of PWYP-Gabon and the January 2009 imprisonment of PWYP-Gabon coordinator Marc Ona and member George Mpaga (Refs. C and D). Both men faced international travel bans until Ona's recent trip to the United States to receive the Goldman Environmental Prize (Ref. A).

[1](#)4. (SBU) Although Ona and Mpaga accompanied the PWYP delegation to its high-level meetings, they did not bring up the political critiques that have gotten them into trouble with government authorities over the past year, including concerns about control over the military, succession politics, and other issues.

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Civil Society Participation  
In Transparency Initiative  
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[1](#)5. (SBU) To date, PWYP-Gabon has been the leader of civil society coordination and engagement in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). EITI collects, compares and publishes data on production and revenue payments in Gabon's oil and mining sectors, and is reviewing the possibility of such reporting

for the timber industry. EITI published three reports on Gabon to date, each more comprehensive than the last.

¶6. (SBU) As the coordinator of PWYP-Gabon, and despite his political problems, Ona was maintained as one of six civil society representatives in the Interest Group. New members of the group include a senior Roman Catholic cleric and journalist. Ona told us that he is pleased with the caliber of his new colleagues.

¶7. (U) The PWYP delegation was led by Marie-Ange Kalenga, coordinator of PWYP-Africa. The group also comprised Christian Mounzeo, member of PWYP-Congo and African civil society representative on the international EITI board; Michel Roy, member of Catholic Relief Services and international NGO representative on the EITI board; and Maroufa Diabira, member of PWYP-Mauritania.

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Comment  
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¶8. (SBU) Gabon is considered a leader among African nations within EITI and has made steady improvements in its revenue reporting from the publication of its first report in December 2005 (Ref. B). However, the country lost its seat on the international EITI board because of the suspension of PWYP and other local NGOs in January 2008 (Refs. C and D), which the EITI board judged to be inconsistent with the obligation to permit the active engagement of civil society in public debate. If Gabon is to fulfill this requirement and be recognized as an EITI compliant country, its leaders must establish a secure place for PWYP and other civil society organizations on the national landscape. End Comment.

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